



IN TOUCH

Emotional Health Fitness

You know that physical exercise is important to staying healthy and warding off chronic disease. Well, your emotional health is no less important—you just don't hear about it as much. Here are a few "exercises" to help you stay fit:

- 1) *Emotional Awareness:* Practice being aware of your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. When you experience stressful states, manage them with healthy ways of coping.
- 2) *Talk about Your Feelings:* Talk about how you feel with someone you trust in order to think through difficult emotional events.
- 3) *Focus on the Positive:* Difficult and distressing experiences happen to everyone. Bounce back faster by practicing letting go, anticipating a positive future and taking action to shape a desired outcome.
- 4) *Think Upstream:* Many life struggles are avoidable. Make decisions early that may prevent or lessen crises later.
- 5) *Aim for Balance:* Make time for things you enjoy, and practice renewal by detaching regularly from sources of chronic stress (don't think about them all the time).

Count on the EAP to help you with the above!



Helping people lead healthier lives

Natural Disasters

While some natural disasters are easily predicted, others happen without warning. Plan in advance so you are prepared. First, find out what natural disasters are most common in your area. Flooding is the nation's single most common natural disaster and can happen in every state. Earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, wildfires, landslides and severe winter weather can also cause natural disasters. Making an emergency supply kit and developing a family communications plan are important in any natural emergency. Prepare your family by creating a family disaster plan. Gather family members and review hazards, warning systems, evacuation routes and community plans, as well as what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued. Additionally, discuss the following: family communications, utility shut-off and safety, insurance and vital records, special needs, caring for animals and safety skills. Include in your emergency supply kit your own food, water and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Remember that basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones may be cut off for days or possibly weeks. Once you have developed your plan, you need to practice and maintain it. Conduct drills that test the plan and your family's knowledge of it. *Important:* Don't forget to replace and update perishable disaster supplies!

Source: www.fema.gov
(Disaster > Communities > Preparedness > Community and Family)

Helping Aging Parents Stay Independent

As people grow older, the last thing they want to do is to give up their home, even if they are no longer able to care for themselves. Here are five tips to help seniors stay in their own homes longer:

- 1) Have meals delivered through a senior meal delivery program. It not only provides nutrition, but also social contact for seniors who are not able to leave the house.
- 2) Hire a home-care aide to help with housework or lawn work a few hours a day.
- 3) Obtain products that make life and mobility easier, such as being able to get out of a chair, turning a doorknob or having a motorized scooter.
- 4) Enroll in an emergency alert system, not just for slips and falls but also in case of fire or other emergencies.
- 5) Make the home a safer place by adding ramps, grab bars in the tub or shower and non-skid floor mats.

While some resources may not be cheap, financial assistance may be an option. More than 30,000 assisted-technology products, information resources and consultative help can be found at www.abledata.com or by phone at 800.227.0216. More information is available from your local area agency on aging or your EAP.

Source: National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education

Recall Resource

The website, www.recalls.gov (or www.recalls.gov/spanish.html), provides consumers with recall information on all types of products with clear instructions on what to do if you have purchased a recalled product.

Using Your EAP

Question: My supervisor has referred me to the EAP, but I think I can handle my problems on my own. Should I accept if I don't think I need to go? I was not referred for violating an organizational policy or anything else serious.

Answer: Accept the referral with the idea that you are more likely to resolve your problem with EAP support, even if you have an idea about how to go about it. You naturally feel capable of resolving problems on your own, but it is also natural to resist accepting professional help. Meeting with someone you don't know, concern about confidentiality, resistance to hearing a solution you don't want to accept, or feeling vulnerable at an assessment is understandable. However, EAPs resolve these concerns with their professionalism and experience. Accept the free help from the EAP rather than going it alone and risking the consequences of not resolving the problem.

Question: I want to be open, but am worried about what the EAP professional might think of me or record in his or her notes during my session. I know the EAP is confidential, but I am still concerned. Should I be?

Answer: EAP professionals obtain only the information necessary for optimal EAP service to the client. References and information that has no direct relevance to the issue of concern is avoided. EAP professionals recognize the value and uniqueness of all people. Therefore being "judged" or criticized is not part of the EAP assessment process.

Camera Phone Awareness

Be aware of people standing near you in a checkout line. If they have a camera cell phone, they can take a picture of your credit card which gives them your name, number and expiration date. This type of identity theft is a fast growing scam.

Indoor Mold

If your home has been exposed to flooding or any other source of moisture, you need to be concerned about mold occurring and spreading. Microscopic particles of mold are ever present in the air, indoors and outdoors. When mold lands on a wet surface, it begins to spread by creating spores (like seeds) that grow and multiply. People who inhale spores or come in contact with mold (either through skin contact or swallowing) can be affected by it, and people with asthma are particularly vulnerable. The type and severity of reactions to mold varies from individual to individual but commonly experienced symptoms include:

- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Wheezing / breathing difficulties
- Skin and eye irritation
- Upper respiratory infections

If you can see and/or smell mold, it needs to be removed as soon as possible. Because even dead mold can cause reactions, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says the mold needs to be removed entirely rather than just cleaned. According to the EPA, if the moldy area is less than about 10 square feet (roughly 3x3 foot), most people can clean it on their own. However, if you have significant water damage or a mold patch exceeding 10 square feet, the EPA recommends consulting their guide, *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings*, (this guide is also applicable to private residences) before taking action on your own.

To learn more about the dangers of mold and how to get rid of mold, go to:
www.epa.gov/mold/moldresources.html or
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/

Better Eat Your Wheaties

A research study of 80,000 male physicians discovered that those who ate at least one bowl of whole grain cereal per day had a lower chance of dying from heart disease during a five and one-half year follow-up period. The researchers took into account risk factors such as cigarette smoking, high alcohol intake, low physical activity and high cholesterol. The surprise: Every medical cause of death was reduced as a result of eating whole grain cereal compared to men who ate none or who ate refined grain or sugar coated cereal. What researchers think: Whole grains help lower cholesterol and blood pressure and improve how the body processes insulin and glucose. Whole grains also contain more beneficial micro-nutrients, antioxidants, minerals and fiber.

Source: Feb 2003, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition

Suicide Prevention: Counseling Works

A person who receives counseling following a suicide attempt is 50 percent less likely to make another attempt. So, encouraging a friend or family member to seek professional counseling is the most important thing you can do to demonstrate support. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for adults under 65, according to the National Institute for Mental Health. Seventy percent of people who commit suicide tell someone about their plans or give warning signs. Despite progress in the battle against the stigma of seeking mental health services, much of society still lacks a positive attitude toward mental health care. This results in patients failing to show up for scheduled appointments and other resistance to help. Give positive reinforcement to the person seeking mental health services, acknowledge a person's depressed state and provide support to save a life.

Source: NIH News; 08.02.05

Sibling Rivalry

Children in the same family are going to fight. It's only natural. They fight for all sorts of reasons, starting with the fact that they're going after the same thing—the love, time, attention and approval of others. Competition and the simple teasing which starts many arguments and fights is a completely natural instinct.

Temperament, gender, age and age differences are factors that determine the level of sibling rivalry you may experience. Some kids are naturally more easygoing which tends to win them praise. Others may have a more difficult or forceful personality. In general, rivalry is reduced when two children are of the opposite sex. With two boys or two girls, there's more pressure to be different, to be better than one another and to find different ways to compete. When a new baby is born, toddlers less than three or four years old often have the hardest time sharing affection and attention. Also, when siblings are older and more directly in competition (sports, school, etc.), rivalry may become more obvious.

For parents dealing with sibling rivalry, the first step is to understand that each child and each child's experience as a sibling is different. Here are some hints for navigating the sibling rivalry playing field:

- Appreciate each child's differences. Treating each child the same will only make one or the other feel cheated.
- Never play favorites. You may feel you understand one better than the other, but never allow your children to feel or see any favoritism.
- Try not to take sides or punish the "at fault" child. Often it's impossible to truly tell who "started it."

- Validate feelings. Anger may disappear if a child knows you recognize their feelings: "That made you mad, huh!"
- Reward good behavior. This will act as a cue for both children.
- Avoid making comparisons between children. This may make them more competitive and can backfire if you are trying to encourage good behavior.
- Plan activities for everyone's interests and talents.
- Spend time with each child and give each their own space and privacy.
- Take turns with privileges and tasks by setting a clear schedule.
- Whenever possible, stay out of fights. Kids will often settle their own problems. Without a referee, fighting isn't as much fun.
- Do get involved, however, if the same argument keeps happening or if the fight is serious and one or both children are in danger. Wait until everyone is calm, listen to what each child has to say and together try to come up with a solution.

Remember, there is a plus side to sibling rivalry. Your kids are learning how to deal with disagreements and how to stand up for themselves.

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To speak with an EAP professional,
please call:

800.765.0770